

May 2011

Mayor Tom Barrett Hosts 2nd Annual Infant Mortality Summit: Preventing Prematurity



Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker, Keynote Speaker Dr. Janice Whitty, and Mayor Tom Barrett

Nearly 250 physicians and other health care professionals gathered at the Intercontinental Milwaukee Hotel to hear about cutting-edge recommendations to help decrease Milwaukee's infant mortality rate on Wednesday, May 11. The event, hosted by Mayor Tom Barrett, was Milwaukee's second annual infant mortality summit, which focused on prematurity, the leading cause of infant death.

"High rates of infant death are a tragedy for our community, and they also point to a broad spectrum of social and economic issues that drive poor health at all ages," Mayor Barrett said. "Turning the tide will take a massive effort from all sectors of this community, but if anything is worth fighting for, this is."

Dr. Janice Whitty, a Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology and Director of the Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine at Meharry Medical College, was the keynote speaker. Dr. Joan Prince, Vice Chancellor for Partnerships and Innovation at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, served as the Master of Ceremonies.



Master of Ceremonies Dr. Joan Prince, Southeast Region Director Robert Harris, and Dr. Veronica Gunn

The goal of the summit was to encourage action by physicians and other maternity care professionals. To help reduce premature births, providers were asked to:

- Aggressively screen and treat pregnant women for chronic diseases and infections (and reinfections)
- Screen all pregnant women for smoking and second-hand smoke exposure, and provide assistance with quitting and exposure-avoidance
- Ascertain gestational ages of all prior pregnancies, and follow current, evidence-based treatment (such as 17 hydroxyprogesterone) for women who have had a previous preterm birth.

The summit also included a panel discussion with local physicians and a nurse midwife who brought home the key messages by highlighting examples of successful interventions in their own practice.

The Presenting Sponsor for the summit was Wheaton Franciscan St. Joseph. Supporting Sponsors were Children's Community Health Plan, United Way of Greater Milwaukee, United Healthcare Community Plan, Molina Healthcare, and March of Dimes.



Panelists from left to right: Mary Mazul, Certified Nurse Midwife, Dr. Cresta Jones, Dr. Ken Schellhase, and Dr. Tina Mason